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# Nike-X Decision Cuts 2 Ways

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President Johnson's decision against an American missile defense is designed to be a threat as well as an opportunity to the Soviet Union.

Johnson's position—as outlined last night in his State of the Union message to Congress and elaborated on by other officials—is this:

The U.S. government will disregard the Russian start on a defense against U.S. missiles provided agreements can be reached to dampen the arms race. But if the Kremlin wants to race—by continuing to install more defenses—then the United States will be ready to start quickly on its own defenses.

## Won't Please Congress

Johnson's decision will not please Congress or his principal military advisers. Last year Congress voted, in effect, to go ahead with the Nike-X anti-missile missile—an interceptor that has been under development for a decade.

Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended unanimously in the past—and presumably will recommend again if congressional committees ask—that the President start now to produce the Nike-X and continue with a \$25 billion installation that would be completed in 20 years.

Johnson does plan to offer a compromise to the advocates of Nike-X—a compromise that carries an implied threat to the Soviet Union. He will ask Congress for money to continue to improve the prototype weapon and to buy test models. He will be able to say that the real decision is to postpone Nike X, not to abandon it.

If an arms control agreement with Russia is not reached, he can review his decision.

The President's position is made more difficult by the Russian decision to go ahead with at least a small installation. There is a sharp disagreement among intelligence analysis over the expense, but it is a fact that Russia has something, while the United States has nothing.

As early as 1963 some intelligence officers concluded from reconnaissance satellite pictures that the Soviet Union was installing an ICBM interceptor around Leningrad. Soon similar sites were under construction around Moscow.

There apparently were two

starts and stops. Then the sites were detected around a number of cities.

As the installations progressed, original questions about the true nature of the weapons were renewed. It seemed to some analysts in the Pentagon and the State Department that the Russians were installing antiaircraft, rather than anti-missile defenses.

Then a new kind of missile site was built in the Moscow area—but nowhere else. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said in November that there was "considerable evidence" that Russia was "deploying" an anti-missile missile.

Yesterday Johnson said flatly that the Soviet Union "has begun to place near Moscow a limited anti-missile defense." Other officials said that those are the only sites that are known today to be missile interceptors.

The President did not say that the American people can have the same thing.

He did promise an offense that would penetrate any Soviet defense: "My first responsibility to our people is to assure that no nation can ever find it rational to launch a nuclear attack or to use its nuclear power as a credible threat against us or our allies."

From there he went to his plea for arms control and disarmament agreements with Russia.

"We have the solemn duty to slow down the arms race between us, if that is at all

possible, in both conventional and nuclear weapons and defenses. Any additional race would impose on our peoples, and on all mankind, an additional waste of resources with no gain in security to either side."

In that last phrase lay the real basis for the President's decision against the Nike-X. McNamara and many of his advisers are convinced that the Nike-X—or any other proposed interceptor—could not save enough lives during an all-out Russian attack to permit the United States to survive.

However, the decision to keep the test program going (full testing of the Nike-X is not scheduled to be completed until 1969) will permit the President to proceed at some later date with a limited Nike-X program designed to protect against lesser threats.

## To Improve ICBMs

The President also confirmed last night that the Soviet Union is improving its missile offense.

The United States is about to complete its planned force of about 1,000 ICBMs. The quality of the force will be improved—particularly the ability of one missile to destroy more than one enemy target—but the number will not be increased.

The effect of the decision revealed last night is to show that the President finally is convinced that it is impossible to fight and survive an all-out nuclear war and that American hopes must be placed on deterrents to war.